

Using Faculty Learning Communities and the Campus Teaching Learning Center to Ignite Service-Learning on Your Campus

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The Value of Service Learning

Service-learning is a valuable pedagogical tool to integrate service to community with classroom learning. In their most limited sense, service-learning courses unite in a single mission the traditionally-separate duties of research, teaching, and service (Cushman, 1999). Additionally, more than volunteerism, service-learning combines community work with classroom instruction, emphasizing reflection as well as action. It empowers students by making them responsible in a real-world context, while giving them the support, encouragement, information, and skills to be effective scholars and citizens. (Rosenberg, 2000)

Although service-learning is a relatively new pedagogy, many studies have reported various benefits from the use of service-learning in college curriculums (Speck, 2001). The win-win-win combination comes from the benefits students derive from real-world assignments, benefiting members of the community, more effective teaching tools for faculty and great interaction with students, as well as the positive connection the university develops with the community.

Center Collaboration With Faculty Member

on Existing Service-Learning Project:

A Case Study of a Success Story

For five years, the faculty member had been coordinating the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program, having students prepare tax returns for poor and elderly taxpayers with limited success. Once the staff member of the campus teaching learning center learned of the project, identifying it as service-learning, she referred the professor to financial, staff, and other resources. In one year, this collaboration resulted in a greatly improved program and we now have a basis of assessment data to study the long-term impact of this program.

Results of the Collaboration: Before vs. After

- Received a Campus Compact Grant.
- Increased faculty involvement in this project (1/6).
- Created a Service-Learning Faculty Learning Community.
- More students became involved (10 graduate students only/28 graduate and undergraduate students).
- Increased assistance to the community (10 people/83 people).
- Partnered with local church to serve Hispanic (non-English-speaking) community.
- Increased awareness and involvement for faculty throughout university.
- Gained greater university exposure within the community (agencies and needy served, publicity).

Who Benefited?

- *Students* experienced practical real-life application of concepts, instead of an artificial assignment from the book. Additionally, the students reported benefit from exposure to diverse groups of people served, with whom they rarely come into contact (poor, elderly, Hispanic/non-English-speaking).
- *Faculty* were able to add a relevant and interesting assignment to their courses, replacing 'made-up' assignments from the book. Another benefit mentioned frequently was the relationships gained with faculty of other disciplines with whom they had not known prior to participating in the project.
- *Community* members received free tax return preparation, as well as favorable interaction with college students and faculty.
- *University* relations with the community were expanded, furthering the university mission of community service. Additionally, the university received very favorable publicity through newspaper coverage.

Interactive Portion

Participants will take part in an interactive exercise to discover and develop service-learning opportunities for their classes; identify possible resource opportunities and natural partnerships with current campus offices. We will distribute questionnaires to aid participants in discovering service-learning opportunities within their schools, and lead a discussion to share ideas. Attendees will also participate in an exercise designed to help them consider

additional learning objectives for courses incorporating service-learning into the curriculum. We will also share with participants the results of our first year of pre-post survey results and our future goals.

We will also address the benefits of utilizing a Faculty Learning Community to increase awareness and involvement of faculty in service-learning.

References

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